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Western Europe: Public Attitudes Toward the US and the USSR [redacted] 25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

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EUR 86-10014L
May 1986

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Western Europe: Public Attitudes Toward the US and the USSR

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An Intelligence Assessment

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Western Europe: Public Attitudes Toward the US and the USSR

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Key Judgments

Information available as of 30 January 1986 was used in this report.

Public opinion polls in Western Europe—including several USIA studies—suggest that positive sentiment toward the United States has declined over the past three decades, particularly in Britain. Nonetheless, except in Greece and Spain, majorities or large pluralities continue to believe that the basic interests of their country and those of the United States are fairly well in agreement. In France, pro-American sentiment is actually on the rise. The erosion in friendly feelings toward the United States, moreover, has not been accompanied by a marked improvement in the Soviets' image. Negative sentiments toward the USSR continue to outweigh positive feelings by huge margins, and most respondents perceive a fundamental difference between the basic interests of their country and those of the Soviet Union.

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Although West Europeans remain much more positive toward the United States than toward the Soviet Union in their general attitude, disturbingly large numbers—about 30 percent in many countries see no moral difference between the political systems of the superpowers. This finding, we believe, mainly reflects a low regard among many West Europeans for US social policies rather than lack of support for democratic values. In particular, younger, well-educated, left-leaning Europeans—the so-called postmaterialists—consider the United States to be a materialist society whose wealth is used to spur the arms race rather than to reduce socioeconomic inequalities.

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The tendency to equate morally the superpowers' international conduct is even greater. barely one-third of respondents in West Germany, Italy, and Belgium—and even fewer in the Netherlands and Spain—consider the foreign political behavior of the United States to be morally superior to that of the Soviet Union. The West Europeans' skepticism, we think, is based on a belief that both superpowers seek primarily to expand their spheres of influence and that this power rivalry increases the risk of war.

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Although majorities in most countries support NATO, substantial segments of West European publics—ranging from 25 percent in West Germany to 48 percent in Italy and 58 percent in Spain—also express support for a neutral Western Europe in their responses to a more hypothetical followup question. Support for neutrality is strongest among the young, the university educated, and leftists—the same groups that have the greatest tendency to equate the superpowers' sociopolitical systems and international conduct.

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Because many respondents simultaneously support NATO and the idea of a neutral Western Europe, we believe they understand neutralism to mean a more assertive defense of national and European interests vis-a-vis the United States rather than withdrawal from the Alliance. Majorities in most West European countries especially want to stay away from super-power quarrels in the Third World, partly to avoid getting involved in a possible military confrontation that might then spread to Europe.

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Security policy elites (opinion leaders and decisionmakers on security issues) in West Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands share with the general public a belief that the US-Soviet rivalry poses the greatest threat to their national security. Majorities of elite respondents polled in these countries think that detente should be pursued independently from the East-West military balance. A key exception is the French security elite, which—like the French public—emphasizes the danger of Soviet expansionism and advocates more hardline Western defense policies.

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We think a belief that the United States has ignored European interests has increased the desire for political independence from the United States. Although public opinion is only one factor determining public policy, increasing popular activism on security issues has constrained West European governments' ability to determine foreign policy positions. To avoid charges of "subservience" to the United States, Allied governments have increasingly been forced to demonstrate to their publics that they have an independent voice in international affairs and are able to influence US policy. Although future political leaders also will recognize the practical necessity of cooperation with the United States, they will be less inclined than the current generation of politicians to consider the Alliance "a community of shared values and interests."

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Contents

	Page
Key Judgments	iii
Introduction	1
Trends in Attitudes Toward the Superpowers	1
Image of the United States	2
Image of the Soviet Union	3
Moral Equivalence of US and Soviet Political Systems	4
Perceptions of Superpower Foreign Policy Behavior	5
Neutralist Currents	8
Elite Views on East-West Relations	11
Demographics	12
Implications for the United States	13

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Western Europe: Public Attitudes Toward the US and the USSR

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Introduction

During the past few years, widespread protests against INF deployment, incessant media criticism of US foreign policy combined with a sometimes benign treatment of Soviet actions, and the leftward shift of some key political parties have raised the question whether Western Europe is moving toward a position of equidistance in the East-West struggle. Members of the foreign policy establishments on both sides of the Atlantic have begun to worry that postwar Europeans, having grown up in a period of relative prosperity and peace, hold more skeptical views of the United States than their parents and grandparents who remember America's role in rebuilding war-torn Europe, the origins of the Cold War, and NATO's protective role. According to several academic studies, the highly educated "successor generation" in particular finds fault with the sociopolitical systems and international behavior of both superpowers. This "plague on both your houses" attitude, many observers fear, will strengthen neutralist currents and weaken the Atlantic Alliance as this emergent elite attains positions of influence.

Using public opinion polls—including USIA surveys

this paper will examine:

- The scope and nature of anti-Americanism and pro-Sovietism.
- Perceptions of "moral equivalency" of the US and Soviet political systems and international behavior.
- Tendencies toward greater independence from the United States and accommodation with the Soviet Union.
- Variations of opinion among demographic subgroups to test the "generational change" hypothesis. While recognizing that public opinion is only one factor in determining government policies, it will attempt to assess the implications of the findings for the future relationship between the West Europeans and the superpowers.

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The major problem with our reliance on public opinion polls to gauge West European views of the United States and the Soviet Union is the absence of long-term data. With the exception of a USIA series on basic attitudes toward the superpowers, most of our data

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are essentially snapshots. It is difficult, therefore, to ascertain with any confidence whether a given attitude is becoming more common or is diminishing. With these cautions, however, we think it is possible to discern significant patterns in current West European attitudes.

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Trends in Attitudes Toward the Superpowers

USIA polls over the past three decades indicate that, although favorable opinion of the United States continues to outweigh negative sentiments by substantial margins, there has been a gradual erosion of pro-American feelings in Britain, West Germany, and Italy; the decline is particularly steep in Britain. Fragmentary evidence suggests a similar trend in the smaller countries. In France, by contrast, public opinion follows the reverse pattern, revealing an increasingly favorable view of the United States.

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The decline in positive feelings toward the United States, however, has not translated into an improvement in the USSR's overall standing. The same polls show that unfavorable opinion of the Soviet Union is stronger now than during the Cold War era; once again, the shift is particularly noticeable in Britain. Even in West Germany—where the beginning of *Ostpolitik* brought a pronounced thaw in attitudes toward the Soviets in the early 1970s—negative sentiments have returned almost to predetente levels.

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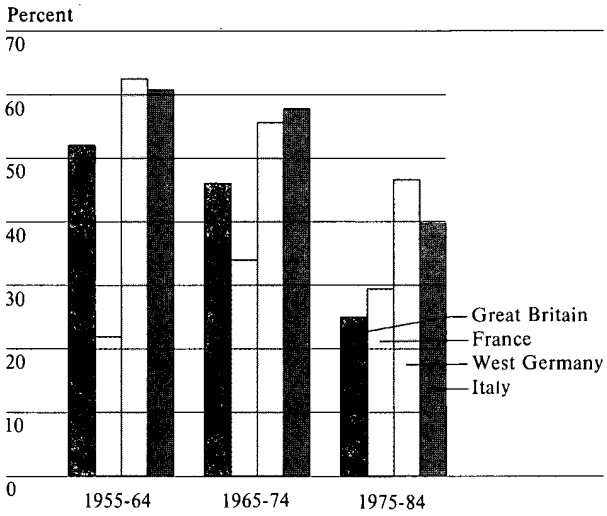
Image of the United States. According to USIA-sponsored surveys, the net lead [1] of positive sentiments toward the United States between 1955 and 1964—when the Cold War was still intense—averaged slightly above 60 percentage points in West Germany and Italy and more than 50 percentage points in Britain; in the decade 1975-84 it averaged less than 50 percentage points in West Germany, 40 percentage points in Italy, and 25 percentage points in Britain. In France, by contrast, public attitudes toward the United States have been warming since the period 1955-64 when America's standing there was much lower than in the other major West European countries. Although the USIA data for France end in 1982, other polls suggest that today Frenchmen, in fact, hold a more positive view of the United States than Britons. This improvement in America's image probably stems from the fact that the French—unlike other West European publics—approve of Washington's tougher stance toward Moscow and efforts to strengthen Western defense (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Long-Term Trend in Favorable Opinion of the United States, 1955-84[a]



[a] Each bar represents the average net favorable opinion of the US over a ten year period, in each respective country.
[b] Data for France are unavailable after 1982.

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America's stock is especially low in some of the smaller West European countries. According to a 1984 USIA poll in the Netherlands and Belgium, only a third of the respondents said they had a good opinion of the United States, although in both countries only 18 percent expressed negative sentiments; approximately four out of 10 said that their impression of America was neither bad nor good. Other recent polls show that anti-American sentiments are strongest in Greece and Spain, where a majority of the adult population holds a negative opinion of the United States.[2]

Compared with the erosion of positive *sentiments* toward the United States, perceptions of shared *basic interests*—after taking a dip during the Vietnam years—were almost as strong in 1982 in Britain and West Germany as during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In Italy, in fact, this perception has strengthened considerably (see figure 2). These findings are all the more striking because in 1982 debates surrounding INF deployment and the Soviet–West European natural gas pipeline project were at peak intensity. Respondents apparently distinguish between fundamental interests in preserving military security, economic well-being, and democratic values—which all Western countries share—and Washington's management of these interests in specific policies toward Moscow. In France, the percentage of respondents emphasizing the congruence of French and US basic interests has increased markedly in recent years, although it remains considerably lower than in the other major countries. Overall, there has been a greater tendency to stress differences of interest with the United States in the smaller countries, especially Greece and Spain, than in the European "Big Four."

[1] The net lead of positive sentiment is the percent of favorable minus unfavorable opinion.
[2] Trend data for the smaller countries are not available.

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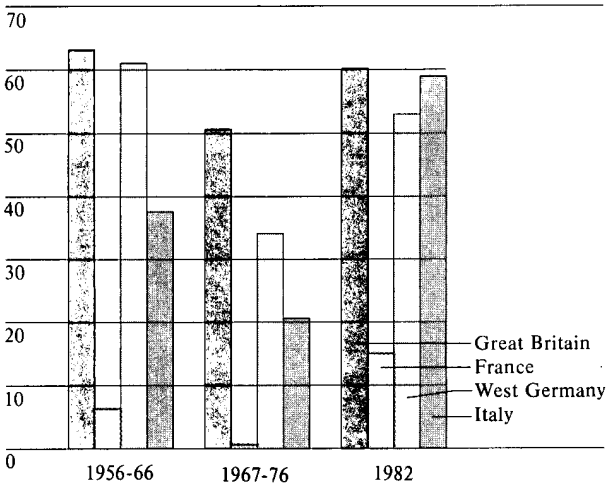
Figure 2
Long-Term Trend in Opinion That Basic Interests Are in Agreement With Those of the US, 1956-82[a]



[a] Each bar represents the average net view that the interests of each respective country are in agreement with those of the US over a ten year period, except in 1982 where the bars represent a single survey.

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Image of the Soviet Union. The decline in favorable attitudes toward the United States has been paralleled in the last decade by a resurgence of anti-Soviet feelings in Britain, West Germany, Italy, and France, undoubtedly as a result of the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, the supression of Solidarity in Poland, and the descriptions of flagrant human rights abuses by Soviet dissidents. The cooling of attitudes toward the Soviets is most dramatic in France—particularly among leftists who in the past had a much more positive view of the USSR than their ideological counterparts in other major West European countries (see inset, "The French Left: A Change of Course").

USIA polls indicate that the growth in unfavorable opinion of the Soviets is accompanied in Britain, Italy, and France by an increase in the proportion of respondents stressing the divergence of basic interests between their country and the Soviet Union. The pattern is different for West Germany: USIA data in

The French Left: A Change of Course

The change of attitude toward the Soviet Union among French leftists has its roots in the 1968 student rebellion, when young radicals extended their criticism of the hierarchical and authoritarian educational system to the structure and performance of the French Communist Party. The student rebels reviled French Communist leaders as "Stalinist bureaucrats" and placed them on a par with authoritarian, statist Gaullists. French intellectuals took up the students' criticism of the "strong state" and began to characterize Marxism—as well as its Leninist and Maoist derivations—as a philosophical rationalization of political repression. Andre Glucksmann—one of these "new philosophers"—classified Marx among the progenitors of the modern police state in his seminal work Les Maitres Penseurs (The Great Thinkers).

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The intellectuals' critique of Marxism is coupled with a sharp attack on the Soviet Union as the epitome of an oppressive regime. The Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, suppression of the Polish Solidarity movement, and Solzhenitsyn's revelations of the Gulag have shattered the French Left's earlier illusions about Russian Communism. According to a SOFRES poll, negative opinion of the Soviet system increased among Socialists from 15 percent in 1972 to 35 percent in 1982 and among Communists from 34 to 67 percent over the same period. A growing perception that the Soviet Union is the real enemy—reinforced by the Mitterrand government's hardline attitude toward Moscow—has caused the formerly anti-American left to see the United States in a more favorable light. A prominent leftist summarized this change of course in a recent television interview when he said: "We have to defend democracy; that is all we have left."

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1982 showed that the percentage of respondents emphasizing shared basic interests with the USSR had increased slightly, perhaps out of fear that the imminent deployment of US INF missiles might lead to war.

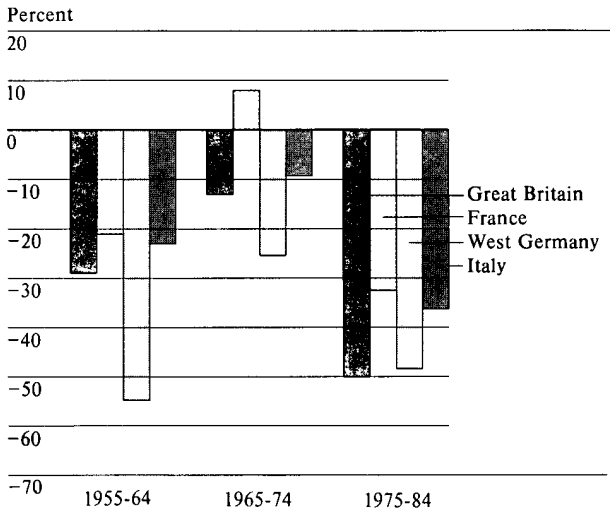
Respondents in the smaller countries—such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain—hold negative attitudes toward the USSR that are broadly similar to those in the larger nations (see figures 3 and 4).

Moral Equivalence of US and Soviet Political Systems

Although West Europeans clearly believe they have much more in common with the United States than with the Soviet Union, questions about their perception of the superpowers' political systems reveal a disturbingly narrower gap.

Various other polls have revealed that young, educated West Europeans with leftist political views—the group showing the greatest tendency to equate the superpowers' political systems—are committed to democratic values, although they generally favor direct political participation (such as the Citizen Initiatives in West Germany) over representative democracy. Rather, we believe, the "no difference" judgment primarily reflects criticism by members of the European New Left of US social policies and the alleged materialism of US society. The New Left—also called postmaterialists by some social scientists—charges that the United States is a wasteful, consumer-oriented society where wealth, rather than intellectual or other nonmaterial achievement, is the measure of an individual's worth. Moreover, although New

Figure 3
Long-Term Trend in Favorable Opinion of the Soviet Union, 1955-84[a]



[a] Each bar represents the average net favorable opinion of the USSR over a ten year period, in each respective country.

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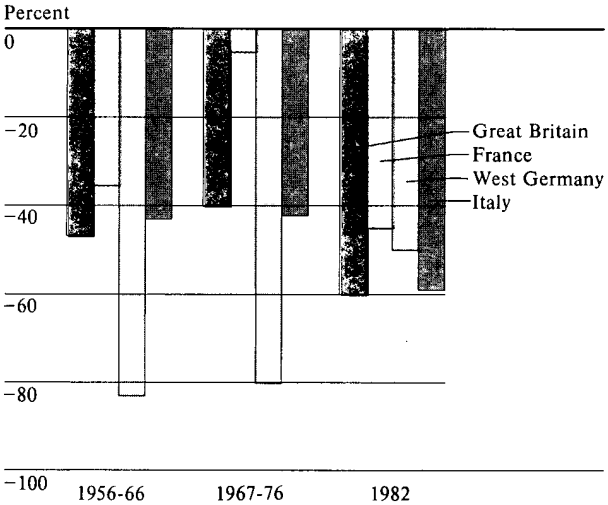
Figure 4
Long-Term Trend in Opinion That Basic Interests Are in Agreement With Those of the USSR, 1956-82[a]



[a] Each bar represents the average net view that the interests of each respective country are in agreement with those of the US over a ten year period, except in 1982 where the bars represent a single survey.

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Leftists—unlike traditional leftists—do not insist on a socialist economy, they do demand a strong social "safety net" for the economically disadvantaged. The United States, in their view, has done less than other Western societies to reduce socioeconomic inequalities through generous welfare programs. Their interest in environmental protection also has prompted them to oppose US civilian and military nuclear policies. [redacted]

Perceptions of Superpower Foreign Policy Behavior

The tendency of West Europeans to see the superpowers as "morally equivalent" is even greater in the international than in the domestic sphere. [redacted]

[redacted] variations in West European opinion on specific foreign policy actions. In a 1984 USIA poll in West Germany, Britain, and Italy, respondents gave the United States far higher marks than the Soviet Union for promotion of human rights abroad, provision of aid to developing countries, and willingness to honor international agreements. Furthermore, the respondents thought that Moscow is much more likely than Washington to use its military power to coerce other countries and to support international terrorism to weaken foreign governments. [redacted]

On other measures of foreign political behavior, however, British, West German, and Italian publics see more similarities than differences in the superpowers. They tend to think that both superpowers:

- Dictate policies to their Allies.
- Intervene in the affairs of others (a 1985 USIA poll, for instance, shows that about 50 percent of West Europeans see no difference between Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and US policy in Central America). 25X1
- Are willing to use chemical weapons (in West Germany, the number of people holding this view reaches nearly 70 percent, reflecting intense public opposition to the presence of US chemical weapons there). 25X1
- Use disinformation to achieve their goals. 25X1

In Britain and Italy, moreover, there is a greater tendency to fault the United States than the Soviets for trying to dominate other countries economically (see figure 5). [redacted] 25X1

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West Europeans also are likely to hold both superpowers responsible for current international tensions. According to a 1984 USIA poll in West Germany, Britain, France, and Norway, respondents in every country except France considered the superpowers' military buildup the main reason for the then deteriorating international climate. Although the Soviet buildup was cited first, US arms modernization efforts ran a close second in West Germany and Britain. In Britain, in fact, those blaming the US military buildup for world tensions increased from 15 percent in 1982 to 37 percent in 1984. Britons also were somewhat more likely than other West Europeans to think that international frictions stem from aggressive US policies toward Moscow. The French attached more importance to US economic policy—such as high interest rates—than to the arms race as a factor in international tensions. However, despite continuing criticism of some aspects of US foreign policy, the French's overall view of Washington's international behavior has improved markedly over the past few years. For instance, a SOFRES poll in November 1985 revealed that 43 percent of the respondents had a good opinion of US world policies, compared with only 30 percent three years earlier.

Even though West Europeans tend to think that both Washington and Moscow are responsible for undermining detente, the superpowers' "peace image" has improved somewhat since the meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev last November. In the past, majorities or large pluralities in Britain, West Germany, France, and Italy believed that the superpowers' foreign policies increase the risk of war more than they promote peace, but the Geneva summit has helped change this view. According to a USIA poll last December, about 45 percent of respondents in the major West European countries thought that the superpowers' policies are promoting peace. Perceptions that both the United States and the USSR are making a genuine effort to achieve an arms control agreement also have increased. Washington, however, continues to be seen as a more serious negotiator than Moscow, except in Britain. Despite the more positive assessment of the superpowers' peace efforts, a majority of respondents remain pessimistic that the United States and the USSR will reach an agreement to reduce nuclear weapons in the near future. Moreover, a large number of respondents, ranging from 64 percent in West Germany to 40 percent in France, think that Washington, if necessary, should give up SDI research to obtain an arms control accord with the Soviets.

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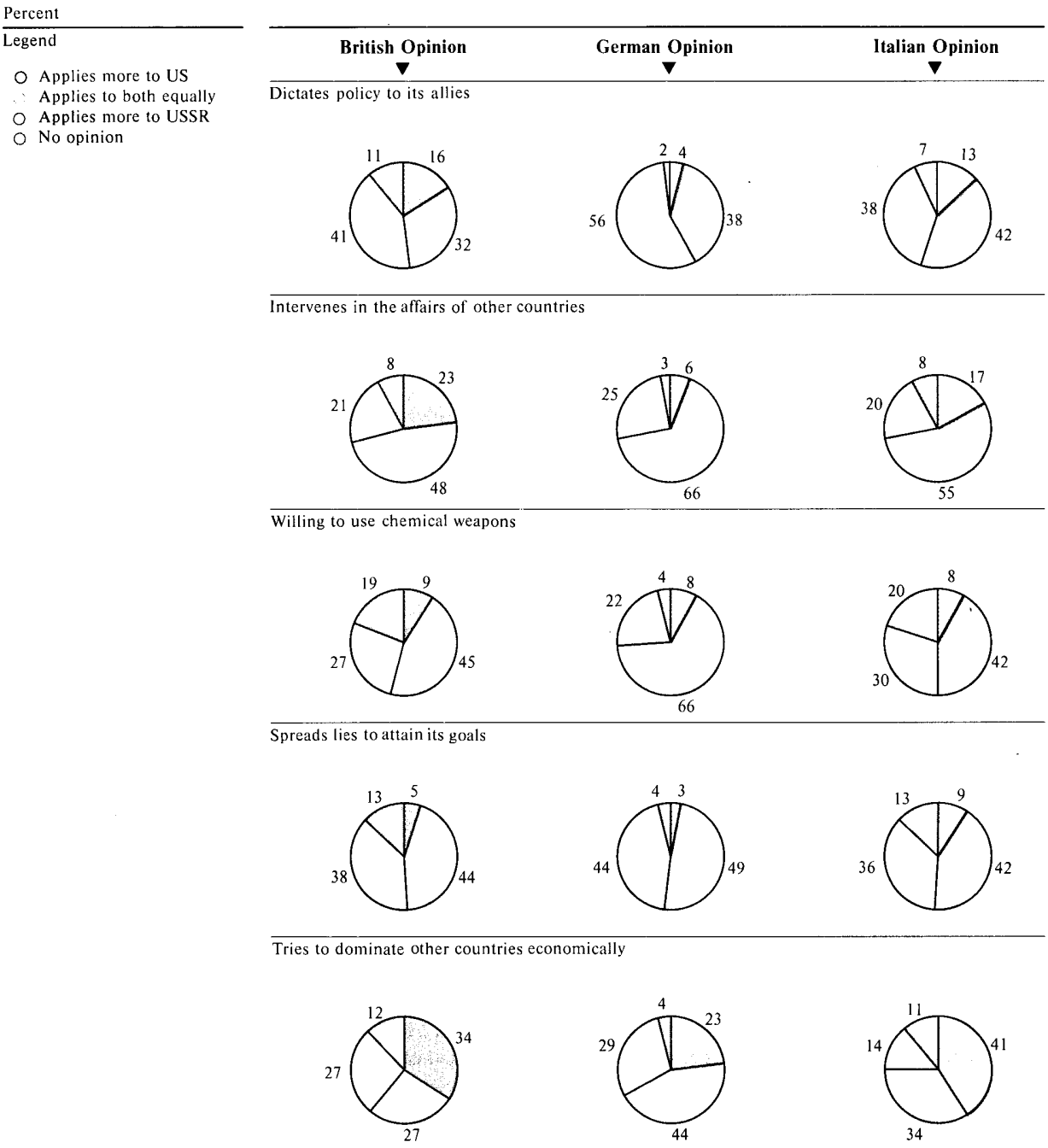
Figure 5
Opinions of the Superpowers' International Conduct



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Britain: Decline in US Standing

Explanations for the growth of anti-Americanism among Britons have emphasized such factors as perceptions of undue US influence on British policy, generational change, and the leftward drift of the Labor Party. Political scientists believe that Britons resent London's eclipse as world leader and its resulting foreign policy dependence on the former "little brother." According to a 1986 Mori poll, 74 percent of the respondents believe that the United States exerts too much influence on Britain's defense policies. A 1984 American Political Science Association study, moreover, showed that 77 percent of those questioned—up from 65 percent in 1982—thought that Washington does not treat London as an equal, and 66 percent strongly doubted that the United States would ask permission from the British Government before launching INF missiles from British soil. Gallup polls over the past four years also show a majority or large pluralities favoring a distinct British voice in world affairs. Perceptions of US domination in the foreign policy arena carry over to the cultural sphere: in 1984, 51 percent expressed concern that US influence on the British way of life was excessive.

British political elites are reacting to and reinforcing popular skepticism of the United States. A new generation of politicians in both the Conservative and Labor Parties has publicly questioned the value of Britain's "special relationship" with Washington. Although the Labor Party has always criticized US foreign policy, the extent and intensity of its differences with Washington over security issues is new. Labor's leftward shift in policy is largely the result of rule changes which have increased the ability of the party's left wing to enforce its views and to elect leaders sympathetic to peace movement goals, such as removal of US nuclear weapons from Britain and cancellation of planned British nuclear weapons systems. In the past, the party's power structure permitted moderate leaders to ignore leftwing demands for unilateral disarmament. Since 1981, however, rule changes have given leftist-dominated local party organizations and unions greater say in the selection of party leaders, forcing moderates to adjust their policies to these groups' views.

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Neutralist Currents

Although popular support for the Atlantic Alliance remains relatively strong, there are significant neutralist tendencies among West European publics.

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many West Europeans—according to academic studies—take "neutrality" to mean greater independence from the United States. Although these people do not support withdrawal from NATO, they want a more assertive defense of national and European interests inside and outside the Alliance. Europeans particularly favor staying away

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The Media: Molders of Public Opinion on Foreign Policy

The media play a significant role in shaping the West Europeans' increasingly negative perception of US international behavior. [redacted] *television is the most influential source of information about the superpowers while the printed media are rated second in importance. In Western Europe the conservative press generally has supported US foreign and military policy, but the left-leaning media—which, we believe, are particularly influential among the educated elite—have been very critical. Leftist journalists generally have:*

- *Opposed INF deployment, SDI, and US antisatellite tests, arguing that they threaten strategic stability and increase the risk of war.*
- *Doubted Washington's sincerity in the Geneva arms control negotiations and willingness to reduce tensions with Moscow.*
- *Portrayed US policy in Central America as "militaristic and imperialistic."*

The leftist media have tended to be much less critical of Soviet SS-20s, and they generally have ignored the fact that Moscow has done research on missile defense for some time. Although they have condemned Soviet actions in Afghanistan and Poland, they have protested US policy toward Nicaragua much more frequently. [redacted]

The obvious bias in news reporting on the superpowers, in our view, does not signify that the non-Communist leftist press is pro-Soviet. According to US diplomats, leftist journalists tend to believe that both superpowers' foreign policies and actions aim primarily at expanding their international power. We believe the leftist media focus criticism on the United States because they know they have a better chance of effecting policy changes there than in totalitarian Russia. In a perverse way, negative press treatment of the United States is a salute to democracy. [redacted]

from superpower conflicts in the Third World that could hurt their economic interests there or embroil them in a confrontation with the USSR. [redacted] 25X1

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[redacted] 25X1

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The tendency toward political equidistance from the superpowers also manifests itself in the growing preference for "equal cooperation" (by implication, outside the security area) with the United States and the Soviet Union. In West Germany, 47 percent of the respondents in a 1984 Allensbach poll favored equal cooperation with both superpowers, compared with 36 percent in 1978. We lack public opinion data for other countries, but much of the West European media has consistently supported close cooperation with the Soviet Union in the economic area. [redacted] 25X1

The desire for neutrality and political equidistance, we believe, is partly a function of growing skepticism over US policies and declining fear of the Soviet Union—which, ironically, has accompanied the increasingly negative West European view of Soviet foreign and domestic policies. According to USIA-sponsored and other polls, West European confidence in US foreign policy leadership and the reliability of the US security guarantee has declined considerably over the past decade. Statements emanating from Washington earlier in the decade about the possibility of a limited nuclear war in the event of a Soviet conventional attack in Europe alarmed many Europeans, and they continue to be bothered by what they view as injudicious remarks on the part of some US decisionmakers. A recent Newsweek poll, moreover, indicated that approximately 50 percent of respondents in Britain, France, and West Germany have little or no confidence that America would risk nuclear war on its own territory to defend its Allies. [redacted] 25X1

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West Germany: Neutralism in Perspective

Because of West Germany's geostrategic importance, recent peace movement activity there has called attention again to neutralist tendencies in West Germany—an issue which was most prominent in the early 1950s. At that time, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) advocated military nonalignment, fearing that West Germany's entry into NATO would foreclose national reunification. Polls showed that many West Germans shared the SPD's position: nearly 60 percent preferred neutrality to a close alliance with the United States. The proportion of West Germans opting for neutrality dropped sharply in the 1960s and since the mid-1970s has stayed about 30 percent. Although reunification of the two German states remains a cherished ideal, polls show that few people are naive enough to think that a West German decision to withdraw from NATO would cause the Soviets to permit such a development.

Contemporary neutralism, we believe, is less a rejection of NATO than an assertion of independence from the United States. Polls taken since the 1970s show that only a small minority (between 4 and 6 percent) favors withdrawal from NATO. Support for neutralism grows when questions probe the US–West German relationship directly. Many people believe that US foreign and military policies disregard West Germany's special interests and vulnerability. In their view, the breakdown of detente in conjunction with the growing arms race increases the chance that West Germany will become "the shooting gallery of the superpowers." They also resent the fact that West Germany has no control over the nuclear and chemical weapons on its soil. Furthermore, many West Germans advocate independence from Washington to preserve the humanitarian gains of Ostpolitik. *They argue that, to protect its relationship with East Germany, Bonn cannot afford to alienate the Soviet Union.*

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Neutralist sentiments are found primarily among the young, among the better educated, and among Green and SPD voters, but there are some neutralist sympathies even within the Christian Democratic rank and file. According to a 1983 poll, almost half of SPD partisans and one-quarter of CDU followers favor Bonn's neutrality over a military alliance with the United States. The leadership of the major West German parties, however, rejects neutrality. Even the SPD, whose opposition to INF deployment has prompted some people to ask whether the Social Democrats are returning to their security positions of the 1950s, denies that its commitment to the Atlantic Alliance has lessened.

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Elite Views on East-West Relations

A survey by the Berlin Science Center in 1983 of security policy elites [3] in West Germany, Britain, France, and the Netherlands showed that French elites generally held the most hardline views and West German elites the most accommodating views on East-West relations:

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- West German, British, and Dutch elite respondents considered the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union the primary threat to

[3] Security policy elites are defined as important opinion leaders and decisionmakers on defense issues. The survey respondents included government officials, party leaders, and members of Parliament as well as representatives of business, labor, the military, churches, media, academia, and the peace movement.

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the security of their country. This belief was strongest among the West Germans. The French, by contrast, placed the greatest emphasis on Soviet expansionism.

- Majorities in all countries except France urged progress in arms control and believed that detente should be pursued independently of considerations of military balance.

- Again with the exception of the French, a large majority of the respondents favored an increase in trade with the East to establish a cooperative relationship and thus facilitate the process of detente. French and Dutch elites were much more willing than their West German counterparts to support economic sanctions against the USSR if it undertook actions similar to those in Afghanistan and Poland in the future.

- Despite the general desire for arms control and detente, majorities in all countries believed that a US-Soviet agreement on strategic weapons should be based on the concept of parity. At the same time, three out of 10 respondents in Britain and the Netherlands—and a somewhat smaller number in France—thought that their countries should take independent unilateral steps toward disarmament as a sign of good will. In West Germany, support for unilateral action reached 40 percent.

- Although many respondents were dissatisfied with certain aspects of the Atlantic Alliance, there was wide agreement on its usefulness. In each country, more than 70 percent of the security policy elites believed that national security could only be guaranteed in close alliance with the United States, and some 60 percent agreed with the statement that peace in Europe could not have been maintained without NATO. However, in the Netherlands and West Germany nearly 60 percent and 40 percent, respectively, also believed that NATO membership severely limits good relations between East and West. Nevertheless, in West Germany only two out of 10 respondents thought that it would be better for their country to be truly neutral. (The survey did not probe support for neutrality in the other West European countries.)

Demographics

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West European security elites also show substantial demographic variation. In the 1983 Berlin survey, younger, left-leaning members of the group generally were much more likely to consider US-Soviet confrontation, rather than Soviet expansionism, the principal danger to their national security. They also had a greater tendency to separate pursuit of detente from considerations of military balance, to favor East-West trade and unilateral disarmament to reduce superpower tensions, and to question the utility of NATO. These trends held even in France, where the Socialist government has emphasized the Soviet military threat.

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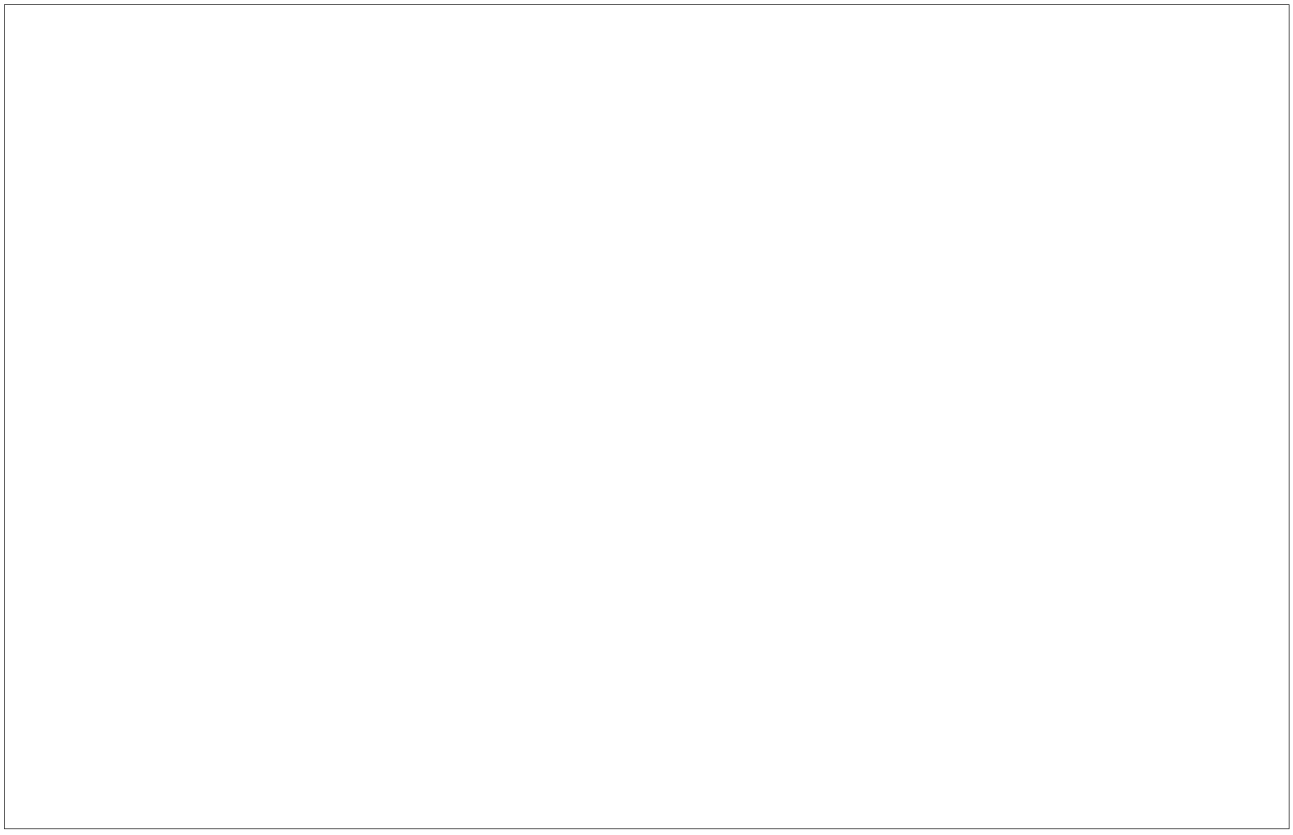

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Implications for the United States

We believe popular desire for arms control and independence from the United States will continue to put pressure on West European governments to display greater assertiveness within the Alliance. Thus, West European political leaders almost certainly will continue to call for bans on nuclear testing and chemical weapons and urge Washington to abide by the limits set in the SALT II and ABM Treaties. The British and West German Governments, whose special relationships with Washington leave them particularly open to attack by leftist critics, will be under strong pressure to show that they have an independent voice in international affairs and can actually influence US policy. To deflect charges of subservience to the United States, they may increasingly feel forced to demonstrate that cooperation with the United States yields tangible benefits for their countries.

West European governments probably will increase their efforts to act as brokers between Washington and Moscow to help keep alive the "spirit of Geneva." However, even though West European leaders—and their constituents—want the arms control process to continue, they will be as wary as ever of actual US-Soviet agreements that threaten to affect the European military balance or revive the specter of "superpower condominium." Although the West Europeans have appreciated the rapid US response to the latest Soviet arms control proposals, they remain concerned about the strategic implications of the US proposal to eliminate all INF systems from Europe. The West Germans, on one hand, stress that such an outcome would be unacceptable without a reduction in Warsaw Pact conventional and shorter range nuclear forces. The French and British, on the other hand, are worried that the antinuclear tone of US and Soviet arms control initiatives will put pressure on their governments to renounce nuclear modernization programs and include them in future arms control negotiations.

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Despite their tendency toward greater assertiveness, current governments, in our judgment, are the most cooperative Washington can expect. Although they will continue to emphasize political and military cooperation among themselves—partly to show their publics that they are not subordinating European interests to those of the United States—they firmly support a close defense relationship with Washington. Even France, despite its traditionally independent foreign policy, has become more involved in the Alliance.

Alliance strains can be expected to grow if leftist parties win the next elections in Britain, West Germany, or the Netherlands. Even though these parties would also recognize the practical necessity of transatlantic cooperation, their willingness to undertake unilateral steps toward nuclear disarmament would seriously weaken Western defense. Moreover, increasing anti-Americanism in the British Labor Party—mirrored in the British public—undoubtedly would undermine Washington's special relationship with London.

Like the leftist parties, members of the successor generation, who are now beginning to move into leadership positions, probably also will acknowledge the limits of independence from the United States, but they will be less inclined than current leaders to see the Alliance as a community of shared values and interests. As a result, US–West European cooperation may increasingly have to be justified in terms of the national interests of each European Ally.

Trends toward greater independence from the United States in public opinion and government policy conceivably could change, although we consider this unlikely. An overtly menacing Soviet foreign policy—especially if it threatened Western Europe itself—probably would galvanize the West Europeans into supporting a harder military line toward Moscow. Alternatively, an extended period of improving East-West relations could undermine leftist arguments that US policies are making war more likely. Intensified US public diplomacy efforts and closer consultation with the Allies would improve the US image among some West Europeans, but we doubt that underlying views of US foreign policy would change markedly.

In our opinion, the West Europeans' more critical view of the United States will not lead to automatic gains for the Soviets. The West Europeans will, of course, continue to seek improved political and economic ties to Moscow even when relations between the superpowers grow more tense. But the deep popular and elite distrust of Moscow revealed by all surveys is almost certain to persist.

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The real problem, in our opinion, will be much greater popularity of detente compared with deterrence and defense. Partly to please their publics, West European governments will be tempted to give less support to needed measures of rearmament than to Western arms control "flexibility"—especially in areas such as SDI that do not directly affect the Allies' own armaments decisions. The problem is not new, but public opinion trends suggest it could increasingly burden Alliance consultations in the next few years, especially if the recent warming in US-Soviet relations does not lead to early progress toward arms reduction agreements. Even if it does, popular concern about the arms race probably will force Allied governments increasingly to stress arms control in public, while privately cautioning the United States against concessions that could harm West European interests.

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